



Affirmation:

Feb 1984

United Methodists for Gay and Lesbian Concerns

Post Office Box 1021

Evanston, Illinois 60204

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BY:

Reconciling Congregation Program

Along with Affirmation's dialogue with United Methodist leaders nationally in past years, many members of the Affirmation network have engaged in educational and advocacy work in local churches. Personal contact and dialogue with individuals at a local level is one of the most effective forms of social change. Many local churches have been quietly engaged in ministry to and with lesbians and gay men, but their work is drowned out by the homophobic actions and statements of other local churches.

The Reconciling Congregation Program formalizes and expands our advocacy work on the local level. This program was enthusiastically endorsed by the participants at the Affirmation meeting in Baltimore in September. The purpose of the program is three-fold: 1) to identify local churches where we are welcome to participate in the full life of the congregation; 2) to provide a vehicle for ongoing education and ministries involving lesbians and gay men at the local level; 3) to empower local churches to advocate lesbian and gay concerns in their communities and to work as

a network for such advocacy on the national level.

The program, modeled after the "More Light" program in the United Presbyterian Church, is explained in the brochure which accompanies this newsletter. Members of the Affirmation network in different regions of the country have agreed to serve as resource persons with local churches which are interested in the program. If you know a local church which could be interested in the program, you can write to the address on the brochure or call Mark Bowman at [REDACTED]. At that point you or the appropriate person will be put in contact with a resource person who can provide some guidance and suggestions for initiating the program in that local church.

The Reconciling Congregation Program promises to open new avenues of dialogue and advocacy in United Methodist churches for lesbians and gay men. It also will provide an arena of activity for members of the Affirmation network who have asked for ways to address lesbian and gay concerns at a local level.

MCC and the NCC

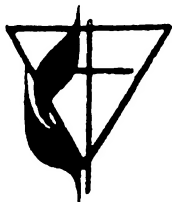
At the Baltimore Affirmation meeting, the group was honored by the presence of several folks who have been a part of the Metropolitan Community Church discussion with the National Council of Churches. A representative of MCC explained to the group the options which were open to their church and asked for Affirmation's input. The representative explained that a basic purpose for the attempt to gain membership on the council has been to create the climate for dialogue and dealing with the issue.

At the recent N.C.C. meeting, then, the body "voted not to vote" on the issue of MCC's membership on the council. Paul Vandenberg, an Affirmation member and a

member of the United Methodist delegation, said that in a resolution which dealt with logistics, the council created a compromise which keeps the lines of communication open. "It was not a no vote; it was not a yes vote." Vandenberg indicated that the MCC is pleased with the decision.

The results of the compromise vote have been 1) a new gay/lesbian and friends caucus has been organized in the NCC; 2) the MCC will continue to be an active part of several committees of the council; and 3) there will be an active effort to nominate gay men and lesbians to the council.

Vandenberg stated also that the United Methodist delegation voted almost in a block in favor of the MCC.



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Baltimore in Springtime . . . DREW UNIVERSITY
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United Methodists strolling in the spring sunshine of Baltimore's Inner Harbor stop to watch a lesbian and gay mime troupe. A laywoman from Topeka who's "never met a gay man or lesbian" receives a lavender-colored newsletter as she enters the Convention Center. A middle-aged pastor from Biloxi peruses several articles on homosexuality before striking up a conversation with a woman wearing a pink triangle. Everyone in the hall applauds United Methodists honored for their support of lesbians and gay men. Hundreds of persons join in prayer on behalf of the lovers, families, and friends of those who have died from AIDS.

These and other similar events will occur at the U.M. General Conference this May in Baltimore. These events will happen, not at the initiation of the United Methodist Church, but because lesbians and gay men refuse to remain invisible. Your assistance and support are needed over the next few months and in Baltimore as we lift up a sign of God's justice and love for all people.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS IN BALTIMORE

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| April 27 - 29 | Affirmation's spring meeting will lay the foundation for Affirmation's life in the next years and will make final preparations for Affirmation's presence at General Conference. |
| Sunday, April 29 | Affirmation invited to worship with the congregation of St. John's U.M.C. in Baltimore; Bishop Melvin Wheatley preaching. |
| Monday, April 30 | A "day in the country" as Affirmation persons who will be at General Conference gather for reflection, nurture in covenant groups, and playing in the outdoors. |
| Tuesday, May 1 | General Conference begins. Affirmation circulates first of daily newsletters and opens hospitality suite. |
| Thursday, May 3 | Dinner honoring those who have been publicly supportive of lesbians and gay men within the U.M.C. (more details forthcoming). |
| Sunday, May 6 | Mid-Atlantic Affirmation (Washington, D.C.) hosts party for those present at General Conference. |
| Monday, May 7 | Celebration of worship for General Conference participants led by Affirmation. |
| Friday, May 11 | Closing of General Conference. |

WE KNOW WE CAN COUNT ON YOU TO SUPPORT OUR WORK THIS SPRING. PLEASE RESPOND ON THE FORM AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS NEWSLETTER NOW. YOU WILL THEN RECEIVE FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SEND QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS WITH THIS FORM.

YES, I want to support Affirmation's efforts at General Conference:

- ☐ I can help with pre-General Conference work: planning, phone calls, mailings, etc.
- ☐ I will communicate Affirmation's agenda and plans with others in my area.
- ☐ I am tentatively planning to be in Baltimore from _____ to _____.
- ☐ Please reserve housing for me at the Congress Hotel. Enclosed is a deposit of \$_____.

At General Conference I am interested in working with: ☐ Newsletter
☐ Dinner
☐ Worship
☐ Hospitality
☐ Street theater

Enclosed is a special contribution of \$_____ to help defray Affirmation's General Conference expenses.

(OVER)

HOUSING IN BALTIMORE

Affirmation has secured a block of rooms at the Congress Hotel in Baltimore (a 10-minute walk from the General Conference site) for the period covering both the Affirmation meeting and the time of General Conference: April 27 - May 12. Daily rates for the rooms are:

- \$24 - private room
- \$12 - sharing room with one other person
- \$8 - sharing room with two other persons

All rooms have a private bath. Rooms must be reserved through Affirmation in order to get the above rate. Since we have to pay for the rooms in advance, we need your payment in full by April 6th. We cannot guarantee any rooms after that date.

PLATFORM STATEMENT

You may have seen references to Affirmation's platform statement in recent editions of Newscope, The United Methodist Reporter, or The Interpreter. This document suggests theological presuppositions and legislative proposals for the General Conference. You will find this document helpful as a basis for communicating Affirmation's agenda for the General Conference with others. To receive a copy of the platform statement, write to Morris Floyd (address below). A contribution of \$3.00 will help defray production and mailing costs.

TRAVEL POOL

All participants in the Affirmation meeting before General Conference will be expected to participate in the travel pool which has been used in our two previous meetings. This is our symbol of economic justice as we pool our financial resources to cover participants' travel costs to and from the meeting. However we do recognize that some persons cannot afford a full share of the pooled travel costs. When you have indicated your intention to participate in the meeting, someone will contact you to find out your estimated travel cost and the amount you will be able to contribute to the travel pool.

TASK FORCES AT WORK

Several task forces have been working through this winter in planning the various events and activities which will comprise Affirmation's presence at General Conference. Along with the ongoing planning and preparations in the next few weeks we also will be sending a mailing to all General Conference delegates. If you are interested in being of part of this pre-General Conference work you can contact one of the members of the Coordinating Committee or indicate such on the return form with this newsletter.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Mary Gaddis
Morris Floyd

[redacted] Holy City, CA [redacted]
[redacted] Minneapolis, MN [redacted]

Ava Scott
Michael Collins
John Hannay
Lyle Loder

[redacted] Philadelphia, PA [redacted]
[redacted] New York, NY [redacted]
[redacted] Washington, D.C. [redacted]
[redacted] Los Angeles, CA [redacted]

Two lesbian members whose names cannot be used.

NAME _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

RETURN THIS FORM TO: Affirmation
c/o Mark Bowman

[redacted]
Washington, D.C. [redacted]

Coordinating Committee To Be Chosen

In 1981 Affirmation set in motion a twelve-month process of discernment through which we explored leadership and organizational options, then selected the approach believed to be most effective and appropriate for Affirmation's overall purpose and immediate goals. In describing the nature and characteristics of our choice, we stated in the June 1982 Affirmation Newsletter, "An exciting new format designed to broaden Affirmation's base of leadership and input was implemented...major work areas were organized into five task forces to be handled by five regionally-based groups. The five task forces include Nurturing, National Church, Communication, Education, and Fundraising."

In describing the Coordinating Committee portion of the new organizational style, the June 1982 Newsletter states, "A ten-member Coordinating Committee was called for, made up of an equal number of women and men and including persons of various ages and ethnic groups who have a spirit of openness and energy to invest in the work of Affirmation. Two members of the Coordinating Committee will act as Affirmation's spokespersons. Each Coordinating Committee member will work with one of the five task forces, serving as liaison for purposes of clear communication, unified direction and comprehensive input."

At the September 1983 Affirmation meeting in Baltimore we reaffirmed this style of leadership and organization. It is now time to name the 1984-86 Coordinating Committee. In keeping with our commitment to a collaborative shared leadership which brings diverse gifts and perspectives to Affirmation's nationwide work, we ask you to assist us in this Coordinating Committee formation. The present Coordinating Committee is charged with the task of nominating the 1984-86 Coordinating Committee at our April 27-29 national meeting in Baltimore. The major nominating work will be done at a Coordinating Committee meeting to be held February 18-20. We want and need your suggestions for potential 1984-86 Coordinating Committee members. Please give some careful attention to this important part of Affirmation's work, keeping in mind our commitment to ethnic diversity, gender parity, varieties of age and geographic location.

Send any names to be considered to Morris Floyd or Mary Gaddis (see CC addresses elsewhere in this newsletter), by February 1, 1984. If you have suggestions that will strengthen our Coordinating Committee approach or overall leadership and organizational style, please send those also. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!



Affirmation Platform Statement

The Affirmation Platform statement is in its final stages of preparation and will be available after the first of the year. Copies of the statement were distributed to the press during the General Conference Press Briefing in November. The statement is now receiving final editing and condensing. For copies, contact Affirmation at the Evanston Post Office Box.

Affirmation Buttons Available

Affirmation buttons have been printed and are ready for sale. The buttons, printed with the Affirmation insignia on a Pink Triangle, are available for a donation of \$1.00. The proceeds for the sale will go to Affirmation as we prepare for the events of the next year. For buttons ordered in bulk, a price may be negotiated. Order your buttons from D. J. Porter, [REDACTED] New Hope, PA [REDACTED].

Covenant Groups Designed

Birthered at the September meeting in Baltimore was a model of care-taking for Affirmation members at General Conference. This model of networking, covenant groups, grew out of a concern that, given a possible hostile climate at General Conference, a main agenda for Affirmation needed to be caring for those of us present there.

Each covenant group will consist of 6-8 persons. One or two persons out of each group could be persons not present at General Conference who commit to be available by telephone for support during the 10 days. The make-up of the groups will be varied, but integral to each group will be a certain level of trust and commonality. The groups will exist as small communities throughout General Conference and will meet

together as the group needs for its support. (For example, a group may covenant to meet briefly once each day to process events or gather support.)

Just prior to the beginning of General Conference, time will be given to training for the covenant groups. The purpose of the training will be to allow members of the groups to develop trust, to get to know how each person might react in particular situations, and to think through the kinds of situations which might occur during the course of the conference.

Participation in a covenant group is greatly encouraged for Affirmation folk attending General Conference. It is hoped that this new creation may be a tool of nurturing in our journey together.

Upcoming All-Membership Telephoning

All Affirmation members will be receiving a phone call some time in the next couple of months. A special group of Affirmation members will be contacting the entire mailing list to update persons on Affirmation's plans for General Conference, to encourage support in a variety of ways, and to clean up the mailing list. Listen for your call soon. . .

Renewal Information

Many of you may have noticed something new on your mailing labels. There is now a code on labels which helps remind folks when their last subscription fee was received. Labels now carry a date indicating one year from your most recent expression of support or interest in Affirmation's work. Remember that we ask for a contribution of \$15 or more to keep the newsletter coming your way. (A contribution of \$20 is needed for newsletters sent first class in a sealed envelope.) Send your renewals and contributions to Affirmation, [redacted] Evanston, IL [redacted].

Affirmation Meeting Dates

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| April 27-29, 1984 | Baltimore, MD |
| May 1-10, 1984 | General Conference |
| September 14-16, 1984 | TBA |
| April 12-14, 1985 | TBA |
| September 20-22, 1985 | TBA |
| April 4-6, 1986 | TBA |

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Mary Gaddis, [redacted] Holy City, CA
[redacted]
Morris Floyd, [redacted]
Minneapolis, MN [redacted]
[redacted]
Ava Scott, [redacted] Philadelphia
PA [redacted]
Michael Collins, [redacted]
[redacted] New York, NY [redacted]
John Hannay, [redacted]
Washington, D.C. [redacted]
Lyle Loder, [redacted] Los Angeles,
CA [redacted]
Two Lesbian Members whose names cannot be
used.

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